



Disaster and Emergency Management Resources

Cleaning Up Flood-damaged Carpet

- The decision to clean or replace flood-damaged carpet depends on a number of factors:
 - If sewage-contaminated floodwater covered your carpeting, discard it for health reasons. Also discard if the carpet was under water for 24 hours or more.
 - If your damage is less severe, you can try to clean the carpet, but you may face health risks, specifically possible contamination with infectious organisms or the development of mold or mildew.
 - The age and condition should be considered as well as whether the damaged is covered by insurance.
 - Padding is nearly impossible to clean so it should be replaced.
- Clean carpets and rugs as quickly as possible.
 - If it's not glued down, roll up the carpet and take it outside to a driveway, patio, or garage floor.
 - If the carpet is too heavy to move, lift it off the floor and prop it up on saw-horses, old chairs, or other supports to drain. It may be light enough to move outside after it drains. Do not let your carpet dry this way if you want to save it because it will be stretched out of shape and will not be flat when dry.
 - Remove the spongy pad underneath and discard.
 - After you have taken up the carpet and pad, clean the floors with detergent solution and bleach before dealing with the carpet, so you can minimize odor and mildew in the house.
 - The best approach is to have your carpet cleaned by professionals, preferably at their shop. Professional cleaners charge by the square foot or the hour. Get a cost estimate before you order the service.
 - A steam-cleaning (hot-water extraction) method is preferred. Professional cleaners will apply chemicals to help sanitize the carpet. They will return it to you dry, but your home must be ready for it.

- You can rent a steam-cleaning machine and buy the appropriate shampoo to use in cleaning. If a machine is not available, you can take the following steps.
 - Take the carpet outside to lay flat on a dry concrete area, such as a driveway, patio, or garage floor, preferably in full sun. A sloping driveway would be the best choice.
 - Use a garden hose with a strong spray nozzle. Start at one end and "sweep" the carpet with water. Do this once. Turn it over and hose the back side. Then "sweep" the face with water again.
 - Pour on an all-purpose liquid ammonia or pine-based cleaner and let it soak a few minutes. (Do not use full-strength ammonia.) Check ingredient labels on brand name products. Your carpet may change color or fade after contact with these cleaners.
- Sweep" the carpet again, forcing the cleaning foam and dirt ahead of you.
 - Rinse thoroughly until all of the cleaning foam has been removed. You **MUST** rinse before any bleaching to remove stains to avoid producing toxic fumes that result when bleach and ammonia are mixed.
 - After the cleaner is rinsed out completely, use a wet-and-dry vacuum to get water out of the carpet.
- Dry the carpet immediately after cleaning to avoid mildew.
 - Use a wet-and-dry vacuum to pull water out of the carpet.
 - Place the carpet in full sun. Turn it over occasionally to speed drying. If you have to leave the carpet outside in the rain, it won't be further damaged as long as it is left flat.
 - If you need to dry the carpet inside, run the central air conditioner and dehumidifiers to help remove moisture. Fans will help to circulate the air, but they won't remove moisture.
 - Dry out the basement as much as possible. Run a dehumidifier and air conditioner to help remove moisture.
 - Close windows on the house if outside air has high humidity. If outside air is drier, open all doors and windows.
 - Run fans to circulate air in tight places, such as closets.

Adapted from resource material developed by the Iowa State Extension Service